

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 11633 101824Z

60

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 COME-00 EB-11 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-07 OPIC-12

CIEP-03 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 DRC-01 /146 W

----- 091000

R 101717Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3743

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PDEV, UK, EI

SUBJECT: GREEN PAPER ON NORTHER IRELAND ECONOMY

1. HMG SEPTEMBER 9 PUBLISHED GREEN PAPER (COPIES BEING POUCHED) ANALYZING ECONOMY OF NORTHERN IRELAND AND ITS FINANCIAL DEPENDENCE ON BRITAIN. ACCORDING TO PAPER, NORTHERN IRELAND RECEIVES NET 313 MILLION POUND ANNUAL SUBSIDY (37 PERCENT OF TOTAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES IN NORTHERN IRELAND) FROM HMG, ONLY 33 MILLIONS POUNDS OF WHICH IS ATTRIBUTABLE TO MILITARY'S PRESENT SECURITY OPERATIONS. TOTAL NORTHERN IRELAND SPENDING DURING 1973-74 FISCAL YEAR WAS 841 MILLION POUNDS, WHILE ULSTER'S CONTRIBUTION, INCLUDING DIRECT AND INDIRECT TAXES, NON-TAX RECEIPTS AND LOCAL NATIONAL INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS, WAS 528 MILLION POUNDS.

2. THIS GREEN PAPER IS FIRST IN SERIES OF DISCUSSION PAPERS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE FOCUS FOR DEBATE LEADING UP TO ELECTIONS FOR ULSTER CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION AND FOR CONVENTION DELIBERATIONS. LONDON PRESS ALSO

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SUGGESTS THAT PUBLICATION OF ECONOMIC FACTS WILL DAMPEN

POSSIBLE LOYALIST ENTHUSIASM FOR INDEPENDENT ULSTER.

3. COMMENT: HMG'S WELL-INTENTIONED AND INSTRUCTIVE EFFORT TO PUBLICIZE ECONOMIC REALITIES OF NORTHERN IRELAND WAS POORLY TIMED FROM STANDPOINT OF ITS RELATIONS WITH CATHOLIC COMMUNITY AND IRISH REPUBLIC. IT CAME ON THE EVE OF PRIME MINISTER WILSON'S MEETING WITH SDLP DELEGATION AND TWO DAYS BEFORE HIS SCHEDULED MEETING WITH IRISH PRIME MINISTER COSGRAVE, AND WILL NO DOUBT EXACERBATE THEIR FEARS THAT WILSON GOVERNMENT FAVORS PRECIPITATE WITHDRAWAL FROM NORTHERN IRELAND. OVER LONGER TERM, PUBLICATION OF THIS DATA SHOULD STRENGTHEN THE POSITION OF MODERATE ELEMENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND. THESE HARD ECONOMIC FACTS, HOWEVER, ARE UNLIKELY TO SWAY EXTREMIST ELEMENTS IN LOYALIST CAMP WHO WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO PREFER AN INDEPENDENT ULSTER TO POWER SHARING WITH CATHOLIC COMMUNITY AND AN "IRISH DIMENSION," EVEN IF IT MEANS SEVERE ECONOMIC DISLOCATION. SOHM

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLICATIONS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ECONOMIC PROGRAMS, FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 SEP 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: kelleyw0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LONDON11633
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740252-0224
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740960/aaaabysg.tel
Line Count: 80
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: kelleyw0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <26 JUN 2002 by cunninfx>; APPROVED <10 MAR 2003 by kelleyw0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GREEN PAPER ON NORTHER IRELAND ECONOMY
TAGS: PINT, PDEV, UK, EI
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005